

The press and media have been given the solemn responsibility of being the watchdog of government in behalf of citizens who, of necessity, go about their daily lives while depending upon alarms to be sounded by a free and independent press. As a citizen whose livelihood is close to the workings of government and who works parallel with many journalists, I have come to understand the loss to citizens and to democracy that results from press/media consolidation.

Both statewide newspapers have been purchased by national chains, Gannett and Knight-Ridder. Since then, we no longer see the investigative reporting that penetrated and exposed abuses by public officials that one could once depend upon from these newspapers. Prize winning journalists are frustrated that they are not permitted to spend the time in research and investigation that results in credible articles on the workings of government that citizens need. Editors and owners are simply not interested in such coverage. Those of us who see abuses that demand exposure are at a loss as to how the public will hold their government accountable if the press is unwilling to inform them.

If we cannot depend upon the press/media to be our watchdog of government, can our form of government survive? The FCC must reject an expansion of rules allowing media consolidation. The Commissioners' responsibility is first, and above all others, to the Republic.